

Exodus 23 - Thursday, March 5th, 2009

- Chapters 21-23 are what are referred to as the "Law of Moses." This is where God lays down the law for the Israelites.
- As we've learned from the previous chapters, there may not be direct application to us, there is certainly profound implication for us.

1 "You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. 2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.

- It's interesting that the law of circulating a false report or accusation would be in with not following the crowd in their doing of evil.
- Perhaps the reason for this is because one is more prone to circulate a false accusation when following the crowd. To do so is evil.
- Why is spreading a false accusation so evil? Because Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and the personification of all that is evil.

- This also has to do with not perverting the course of justice by not speaking up and telling the truth when a dispute is being settled.
- This means that I'm equally guilty to allow a false accusation to continue spreading when it's in my power to stop it by telling the truth.

"...the inventor and receiver of false and slanderous reports, are almost equally criminal. The word seems to refer to either, and our translators have very properly retained both senses".

Adam Clarke

- One of the most difficult things to do is to set the record straight when I'm on the receiving end of what I know is a false accusation.
- It's so much easier just to "go along with the crowd." The problem is when it's a bad crowd who is leading you away from the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." NIV

Proverbs 4:14-17 14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. 16 For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall. 17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. NIV

- We would be grossly remiss to not realize that this was actually illegal. Remember, this is the law, and it's against the law to do this.
- We have a number of references to this in the New Testament, not the least of which is what Jesus said to do in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 18:15-17 15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. NIV

3 You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

- This one is just sort of tucked into the text and it has to do with showing partiality to the poor because we feel for them in their poverty.
- It's interesting that in verse six, it's just the opposite, when it says that we shouldn't rule against them just because they're poor.
- The thought is that we shouldn't treat people differently because of their economic and social status. This is called "blind justice."

4 "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it. 6 "You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

- This has to do with treating your enemy as you would have them treat you. If it's in your power to act and help your enemy, do it!
- Well, I'm off the hook on this one my enemy doesn't have an ox or a donkey, so there. I don't have to worry about this one, next!
- Not so fast bucko; does your enemy have a car, or a surf board. If their board is headed for the rocks, don't rejoice, help them out.

7 Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. 8 And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous. 9 "Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

- This law deals with the evil of taking a bribe and perverting justice which can lead to unjustly sentencing an innocent man to death.
- It also deals with oppressing strangers, which again, God repeats this matter concerning prejudice. They were once strangers in Egypt.
- You get the impression that God wants them to love their neighbors as they love themselves, even if their neighbors are strangers.

10 "six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove. 12 six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

- This law has a two-fold application, both physically, and spiritually. A physical rest from work that points to a spiritual rest from works.
- In addition to this, this was for the benefit of the laborer, the land, and the lowly. The sad reality is that Israel never once obeyed this!
- A consequence of their disobedience God allowed the Babylonians to capture and exile the Israelites for that specific amount of time.

2 Chronicles 36:20-21 20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. 21 The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. NIV

13 "And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

- I believe this has to do with being set apart, or sanctified, in that we are not to be like the world or their other gods. We're to be different.
- For the Israelites to observe these Sabbath's set them apart from the rest of the world and their many gods. It made them peculiar.

Titus 2:11-14 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. KJV

14 "three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: 15 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); 16 and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. 17 "three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

- These three Feasts were the "Big Three" if you will; Passover & Unleavened Bread, Feast of Harvest, or First fruits, and Tabernacles.
- The Passover points to the death, burial, and resurrection, Harvest to the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and Tabernacles to eternity future.

18 "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. 19 The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

- This has to do with not bringing leaven, which was a symbol of corruption, into contact with blood, which was a symbol of atonement.
- Also, they were to bring all, not some, of the firstfruits, or tithe, to the Lord, and, they weren't to boil a young goat in its mother's milk.
- This is interesting given that fact the Jews to this day won't mix dairy with meat because of this law. Cheeseburgers are forbidden!!!

- This doesn't have anything to do with cheeseburgers being illegal; it has to do with not imitating the pagan fertility rituals and practices.
- They were going into a land where this was practiced as a form of worship to false gods in order for them to be fertile and prosperous.
- In addition to this, some commentators believe that it was meant to keep a distance between a mother and the death of her offspring.

"[it was meant] to instill a tender appreciation of the natural order, and of the relation subsisting between the mother and her offspring. It was against nature to make the mother an accomplice in the death of her child."

F.B. Meyer

20 "Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

- This Angel is none other than Jesus Himself. This is what is known as a Christophany, or, pre-Bethlehem appearance of Jesus Christ.
- Notice that Jesus is with them, and going before them, to prepare a place for them. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

John 14:1-4 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going." NIV

21 Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.

- Again, this further reinforces the fact that this is a Christophany, because He is to be obeyed and has power to pardon transgressions.
- In addition to this, the name of God is in Him; "Yahweh," is "Yahshua." In other words, Jesus is with them there in the wilderness.

22 But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. 24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

- Woven into the fabric of these verses is a timeless principle that has application to us now just as it did for the Israelites back then.
- If I obey the voice, or Word of the Lord, then, not only will my life be blessed, but God will oppose those who oppose me on my behalf.
- Conversely, if I'm disobedient to the Word of the Lord, then my life won't be blessed, and God can't oppose those who oppose me.

Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him. NIV

25 "So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. 26 No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

- I believe that this has to do with a supernatural blessing for those in His service, who have dedicated their lives to serving the Lord.
- I'm not dogmatic about this, but there are many in the mission field, without health care, that have had their sickness just taken away.
- Not only that, but bread and water is so bad in some third world countries that they need God's blessing on them or you will get sick.

27 "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

- These verses give us a glimpse of why God does what He does in the way He does it. In other words, God will do this little by little.
- Why? Why won't He do it all at once? The fact of the matter is we don't want Him doing it that way, because it isn't the best way for us.
- Were God to do it that way, it would create a vacuum that would be filled with numerous and perilous beasts that could harm or kill you.

- Personally, this passage of scripture has been a tremendous blessing to me in how it has provided much needed instruction for me.
- I'm impatient by nature, and I not only want the Lord to drive out my enemies in one year, I prefer that He do it in one week, or one day.
- In my experience with the Lord, I'm learning that He doesn't do things in my way, and according to my time. Can you imagine that?

- Here's what I'm learning: God can't prematurely give me that which He has gone before me to prepare for me, or it may destroy me.
- God has to prepare me for that which He is preparing for me, little by little, or else I won't be ready for it, nor will it be ready for me.

31 And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

- Again, like the previous verses, we have a picture of Who God is, and how God is. God wants to bless us, but there are conditions.
- God may bless, but we have to possess. It's interesting to note, that Israel never possessed all the land that God is here giving to them.
- Some have estimated that the most they possessed was 10% of all the land that God had given to them and blessed them with.